

National Commission on Libraries and Information Science

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The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) is an independent agency of the federal government established in 1970 to provide advice to the President, the Congress, and other entities, public and private, regarding the library and information needs of the American public. To carry out its functions, NCLIS conducts hearings, studies, surveys, and analyses of the nation's library and information needs, appraises the adequacies and deficiencies of the current library and information resources and research and development activities, and issues publications.

Highlights of the Year 2003

The year 2003 saw a major shift in the prospects for NCLIS. After two years of struggling to counter a proposal from the Office of Management and Budget to eliminate the agency, a recommendation to fund NCLIS was restored to the President's Budget at the beginning of 2003 and Congress accepted the recommendation. At the same time, the White House Office of Presidential Personnel began the process to fill the vacancies on the Commission that had developed over the past few years; by year-end, a slate of twelve nominees was waiting for Senate confirmation, the final step in their appointment process. Changes in the law were also passed by Congress and signed by the President that would prevent vacancies in the Commission in the future.

NCLIS continued, for the third year, to operate on an appropriation of \$1 million, two-thirds of the amount provided in Fiscal Year 2001. Program and staff reductions instituted in prior years were continued; however, the Commission did attain some important accomplishments. The Library Statistics Program, with partial support from the Department of Education, continued to improve the measurement of library activities throughout the Nation. The Commission also produced a CD-ROM briefing that discussed the public communication role of libraries in the aftermath of disasters. Additionally, with financial help from the State Department, NCLIS convened a meeting of experts in Prague to discuss information literacy. Finally, the new NCLIS nominees attended a Commission meeting in mid-December and began the process of mapping a strategic direction for the Commission to follow in the months and years to come.

NCLIS Members and Staff

NCLIS is comprised of sixteen Members – the Librarian of Congress, the Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and fourteen individuals appointed by the President upon confirmation by the Senate. By law, five Commissioners are librarians

or information specialists, while nine members are drawn from the public and are knowledgeable about the needs of society for library and information services. One of the public members has a special competence in the needs of the elderly; another in information technology.

Members are appointed to five-year terms with specific beginning and ending dates; generally, one-fifth of the Commission is replaced each year. Under the Commission's statute before the 2003 amendments, a Member could serve no longer than one additional year if a successor had not yet been named. Because President Bush had never nominated any new Members, a large number of vacancies had ensued.

The Commission consisted of Martha B. Gould (retired Director of the Washoe County Public Library in Reno, NV), who served as Chairman; Joan R. Challinor, (historian and member of the Advisory Committee of the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America), Vice Chair; Jack E. Hightower (former Member of Congress and a retired Justice of the Texas Supreme Court); and Bobby L. Roberts (Director of the Central Arkansas Library System in Little Rock). Nancy Davenport (Director of Acquisitions for the Library of Congress) continued to represent James H. Billington, the Librarian of Congress. Robert S. Martin (librarian, library educator and former Director and Librarian of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission), as IMLS Director, also continued to be a (non-voting) Member of the Commission *ex officio*.

In July, the term of Chairman Gould, including the one year extension, came to an end, reducing the NCLIS voting membership to four. President Bush designated Dr. Challinor as Chairman and Dr. Challinor named Judge Hightower as Vice Chair.

Significant changes in the NCLIS statute were included in the Museum and Library Services Act which passed Congress and was signed by the President in September. The new legislation changed the terms of Commissioners to continue until a replacement takes office, redefined a quorum to be a majority of the Commissioners actually in office rather than a majority of the number of authorized Commissioners, and clarified authorities in conjunction with the NCLIS Gift Fund. The legislation also removed the assignment of the Commission as advisor to the Director of IMLS (in joint meetings with the National Museum Services Board); instead it creates a new advisory mechanism, consisting of representatives of both the library and museum communities (including, *ex officio*, the NCLIS Chairman). Of course, NCLIS, under its own statute, retains authority to provide policy advice to the IMLS Director whenever it determines such advice is appropriate, and the IMLS Director continues to serve, *ex officio*, as a member of NCLIS.

On October 2nd, President Bush nominated the following twelve individuals to fill all the vacancies on the Commission. (The year in which each nominee's term will end is indicated along with the category of membership, i.e., general public or librarian/information specialist.)

Jose Antonio Aponte of Colorado, executive director, Pikes Peak Library District, Colorado Springs (2007; Librarian/information specialist).

Sandra Frances Ashworth of Idaho, director, Boundary County District Library, Bonners Ferry, ID (2004; Public-needs of elderly).

Edward Louis Bertorelli of Massachusetts, director of employee benefits, MassHighway department and also a member of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. (2005; Public).

Carol L. Diehl of Wisconsin, a retired school librarian at New London, WI, a former member of the Manawa Board of Education, and the Sturm Memorial Library and an instructor for the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, (2005, Public).

Allison Druin of Maryland, assistant professor, College of Information Studies, University of Maryland (UM), College Park (2006; Librarian/information specialist).

Beth Fitzsimmons of Michigan, president, Information Strategists, Ann Arbor, MI. and former chair of the Depository Library Council to the U.S. Public Printer. (2006; Librarian/information specialist).

Patricia M. Hines of South Carolina, previously Chief of Staff of Domestic Policy in the White House under President Reagan and Assistant Secretary of Research and Development in the Department of Education under President George H.W. Bush. (2005; Public).

Colleen Ellen Huebner of Washington, associate professor, University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine. (2007; Public).

Stephen M. Kennedy of New Hampshire, a former computer executive responsible for state government relations and a former official in several New Hampshire administrations. (2007; Public-information technology).

Bridget L. Lamont of Illinois, former director of policy and program development for Illinois Gov. George Ryan and for 16 years the director of the Illinois State Library. (2008; Librarian/information specialist).

Mary H. (Mitzi) Perdue of Maryland, former syndicated columnist on environmental matters and founder of Healthy U of Delmarva, a 6000 member organization which seeks to decrease chronic disease by encouraging healthier lifestyles. (2008; Public).

Herman Lavon Totten, regents professor of library and information sciences, University of North Texas School of Library and Information Sciences, Denton and a former president of the Texas Library Association (2008; Librarian/information specialist).

The President also indicated that he intended to designate Dr. Fitzsimmons Chairman of NCLIS; she succeeds Dr. Challinor, whose term as a Commissioner continues until July, 2004.

The Senate failed to confirm the President's nominations in 2003, but in January, 2004 the entire bloc was approved by unanimous consent and the President appointed all twelve individuals immediately thereafter.

Robert S. Willard, a former Commissioner, continued as the NCLIS Executive Director. Madeleine McCain, with a background in marketing, organizational development, and training in the corporate world as well as experience running her own business, served as the Director of Operations for NCLIS. Dr. Robert Molyneux, a library school professor from the University of South Carolina-Columbia, joined the NCLIS staff to lead the work of the Library Statistics Program; Kim Miller provided staff assistance in the statistic program as well as overall technological support for the Commission. Julie Yoon handled administrative matters, while Khadija Khaalis provided secretarial support to the office. Part-time consultant Dr. Forrest Woody Horton, Jr. oversaw the Commission's international programs. At year end, Executive Director Willard announced his intention to leave the Commission and a search committee was created to seek his successor.

Members of the Commission convened twice in 2003. In May, they met in Reno, NV where they evaluated nominations for the National Award for Library Services and recommended potential award winners to the Director of IMLS. (The awards were presented by First Lady Laura Bush in a White House ceremony in January 2004.) The Members also got together in December, and invited the twelve NCLIS nominees to attend also. This meeting provided an opportunity for the Commissioners and eleven of the twelve Commissioners-designate to get to know one another and begin to discuss the policy issues that NCLIS would address once the nominees were appointed. Thumbnail descriptions of two-dozen topics were presented, and the group determined to focus on four broad areas where library and information services could play an important role: education, emergency preparedness, health, and economic development.

In February 2003, the main public library in Tucson, AZ was named in honor of former NCLIS Commissioner Joel Valdez. Chairman Martha Gould headed a small delegation of current and former NCLIS members who attended the dedication ceremony.

NCLIS Budget

In early 2003, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proposed that Congress provide funding for NCLIS at its FY 2003 appropriation level of \$1 million. This proposal, contained in the President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2004, was in sharp contrast to the two prior years when OMB had proposed elimination of NCLIS. Both years, Congress rebuffed this recommendation and funded NCLIS, albeit at a level one-third below the \$1.5 million that had been appropriated in FY 2001.

In 2002, NCLIS had been invited to appear before the House Appropriations subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies to discuss its budget request. In 2003, there was no similar opportunity. Instead, the Commission submitted its justification material in writing. The Commission explained what programs it would be able to manage at the \$1 million level in the President's Budget, but also described additional efforts it could make at funding levels of \$2 million or \$3 million.

The Congress did not conclude its consideration of some funding bills until long after the new fiscal year began on October 1, 2003. Instead, temporary measures, bills known as "continuing resolutions," provided stopgap funding for about half of the federal agencies, including NCLIS. It was not until the beginning of the calendar year that funding for FY 2004 was finally provided. When the final appropriation bill was approved, it provided \$1 million for the Commission.

Support for Executive and Legislative Branches

From 1997 through early 2001, NCLIS devoted a great deal of energy to the examination of government information policy as it relates to creation, dissemination and permanent accessibility of electronic government information. A landmark NCLIS report, *A Comprehensive Assessment of Public Information Dissemination*, was issued in January, 2001 and recommended policies and procedures for strengthening the dissemination infrastructure of government information.

Because of the reduced funding available to NCLIS, no further action on government information was undertaken in 2003, beyond routine liaison activities. NCLIS Chairman Gould was speaker at the swearing-in ceremony of the Public Printer, Bruce James, who heads the Government Printing Office (GPO). Representatives of GPO, Chief of Staff Frank Partlow and Superintendent of Documents Judith C. Russell (former Deputy Director of NCLIS), attended the May Commission meeting in Reno and briefed the members on developments at GPO.

In August, GPO announced an agreement with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in which the two agencies pledged collaborative activities to preserve and provide permanent access to electronic information from government agencies. This action was a direct result of a recommendation contained in the Commission's *Comprehensive Assessment* report.

National Information Activities

In September 2003, President Bush signed H.R. 13, The Museum and Library Services Act, which included reauthorization of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), the law that provides federal financial support to libraries throughout the nation. The prior year, the Commission had provided advice to the Congress on LSTA and urged it to pass the legislation quickly. Included in the new law (P.L. 108-81) were provisions affecting the terms of office of Commissioners (discussed above).

The Commission continued its effort regarding the production of *Trust and Terror*, an audio-visual briefing on the role libraries can take to provide needed information to the citizenry in the immediate aftermath of a manmade or natural disaster. In 2002, under the leadership of former Commissioner Marilyn Gell Mason, then-Commissioner José-Marie Griffiths, and then-Commission Vice Chair Joan Challinor, NCLIS developed a script and a computer slideshow designed for librarians and their governing boards as well as other public policymakers. Toward the end of the year, renowned broadcaster Walter Cronkite recorded the narration for the *Trust and Terror* presentation and a more advanced computer presentation was produced. The production was recorded on CD-ROM and presented for the first time at the American Library Association Midwinter meeting in Philadelphia in January 2003. Media coverage of the presentation prompted a number of requests for the CD-ROM and copies were mailed from NCLIS. Budgetary limitations prevented a wide scale distribution of the presentation as was originally envisioned.

In anticipation of an eventual broader distribution, however, NCLIS sought and received a letter of endorsement of the presentation from Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and a similar letter was written by Representative Jim Gibbons (R-NV). When the new nominees to NCLIS first met in December they determined that the *Trust and Terror* presentation was a commendable product of the Commission and should be widely distributed.

NCLIS/NCES Library Statistics Program

The Commission believes strongly that in order for policy advice to be useful, it must be based on solid fact. NCLIS has long maintained an important statistical function, and despite the overall reduced budget, this program was maintained at previous levels and even expanded into some new areas.

Fiscal Year 2003 marked the sixteenth consecutive year of cooperation between the Commission and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in implementing the Library Statistics Program (LSP). The Commission serves as a liaison to the library community, organizes meetings and professional development workshops, supports in-state training and technical assistance, monitors trends, and advises NCES on policy matters. The year also saw the beginning of discussions among representatives of NCLIS, NCES, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) about improving the framework for government data collection on libraries and developing programs to widen the use of such statistics and provide specialized training on their use.

The following events occurred as part of the continuing improvement of the joint agency Library Statistics Program: Steering committee meetings for the Federal State Cooperative System (FSCS) survey, March, June and September 2003; State Library Agency (STLA) survey, March and September 2003; Academic Library survey advisory committee meeting at ALA in January and June 2003; and the annual Professional

Development Conference and orientation for new state data coordinators, December 2003.

NCLIS continued its support of *Developing National Data Collection Models for Public Library Network Statistics and Performance Measures*, a project co-sponsored by NCLIS, IMLS, and the National Information Standards Organization (NISO).

The Commission had a significant presence at several research and statistics committee meetings of the American Library Association and its divisions, as well as participation in a variety of state library conferences. NCLIS also continued its participation, first initiated in late 2001, with the European Union library statistics project, LibEcon. The Commission also remained actively involved in US and international library standards activities. In a paper on future directions for the statistics program, Bob Molyneux, NCLIS's new Director of Statistics and Surveys, urged that the library data series produced by NCES be mapped to the Z39.7 standard. Further, he advocated that all library data should be migrated to XML in order to make it easier for librarians to use the data that exist.

Dr. Molyneux also initiated a project to create from the separate, annual NCES public library data one longitudinal file so that trends in public libraries since 1987 can be examined. The database is being normalized so that it can be used to exchange data with others; preliminary discussions have occurred with representatives of GEOLIB at Florida State University about exchanging data between NCLIS and GEOLIB. Upon completion of the state library database, Dr. Molyneux will attempt to develop a similar database for academic library data.

International Activities

The Commission continues to be an active participant in the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). NCLIS Vice Chair Jack Hightower and Executive Director Bob Willard attended the August 2003 World Library and Information Congress: IFLA General Conference and Council in Berlin, Germany.

The Commission continued to host a number of visits to its office by delegations of librarians from other nations, usually under the auspices of the State Department. Mr. Willard traveled to the Russian Republic, at the request of the State Department, to participate in a library conference in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. This conference celebrated the 175th anniversary of the regional scientific library of Kamchatka and explored the "Information for All" initiative of UNESCO. Mr. Willard visited a number of libraries in both Kamchatka and Moscow as part of the trip.

The Commission completed its 18th year of cooperation with the Department of State to coordinate the library and information aspect of the International Contributions for Scientific, Educational and Cultural Activities (ICSECA) program in what might be the final year of this effort. The ICSECA program was developed after the United States left UNESCO in the mid 80s as a means to continue U.S. participation in UNESCO-type

international activities. In 2003, the United States rejoined UNESCO, and it was unclear that there would be funds available for ICSECA inasmuch as the U.S. must now pay dues to UNESCO. NCLIS had supported rejoining UNESCO in a February 2000 resolution.

In recent years, the Department of State had urged NCLIS to tie more closely its ICSECA activities to specific UNESCO goals. After consultation with UNESCO staff leaders, the Commission had developed a program focused on information literacy. Information literacy is the ability to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, organize and use information effectively. It is believed that an information literate citizenry is a key component in national economic development.

The final step of this program, it is hoped, will be an International Leadership Conference on Information Literacy perhaps in 2005 under the sponsorship of UNESCO. As part of the planning effort for this conference, NCLIS, in partnership with UNESCO and the National Forum on Information Literacy, proposed a meeting of experts from throughout the world to share experiences in developing the concept of information literacy in their respective countries

Despite some earlier delays, the Commission was able to convene the meeting of experts in Prague, the Czech Republic, in late September 2003. NCLIS Chairman Joan Challinor and NCLIS Consultant Woody Horton were among the forty participants from twenty-three different countries representing all of the seven major geographic regions of the world. Prior to the meeting each of the experts was asked to prepare a paper on some aspect of information literacy and all the papers (some in multiple languages) are on the NCLIS website. At one point during the meeting, the First Lady of the Czech Republic, Viktorie Spidlova, herself a librarian, took part in the discussions.

Upon the conclusion of the meeting, the experts issued a one-page document, "Towards an Information Literate Society," in which they stressed the importance of information literacy and urged further international efforts including the 2005 conference. In December, a full report on the meeting of experts was issued by NCLIS. The report, along with all documents associated with the information literacy initiative, are on the NCLIS website in the International area.

December 2003 saw another international effort focused on libraries and information. Under the auspices of the International Telecommunications Union, part of the United Nations, a World Summit on the Information Society was held in Geneva, Switzerland. The Summit principally focused on technological issues such as Internet connectivity and domain name registration, but thanks to the efforts of library activists, the role of libraries in assuring access to information was recognized in the deliberations of the summit. The United States delegation to the Summit included NCLIS Chairman Joan Challinor and IMLS Director Bob Martin.

Publications

Because of the reduction in the NCLIS budget and the resultant departure of the staff person responsible for publications, the Commission, did not produce printed publications during 2003. However, a number of documents related to various NCLIS programs were made available on the Commission's website.

Generally, copies of NCLIS print publications are available free in limited quantities from the NCLIS office until supplies are exhausted. Electronic versions are available on the Commission's website. In addition, selected reports, hearing testimony, comments on various matters before Congress and the Administration, news releases, and other items are also on the website. Web: <http://www.nclis.gov/>